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## EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

AMONGST many anecdotes told of the "Duke," in the multitudinous biographies published after his death, there is one which we do not recollect having seen, and which is certainly far more worthy of notice than many of them. The sum and substance of it is, that he, on one occasion, towards the close of the Peninsular war, had an extraordinary narrow escape from being seized by the French, and carried off bodily to the camp of Marshal Soult. This would, certainly, have brought the campaign to a very ignoble end, and though it would not have saved Napoleon from downfall, would have prevented the battle of Toulouse, and thus saved the lives of many gallant men for the time. What might have been the ultimate effects of such a catastrophe upon the lives and liberties of the inhabitants of Europe, it is impossible now to say with any certainty, and useless to conjecture. But to our story:

We all know, that after the great and crowning victory of Vittoria, the British army marched straight to the frontiers of France, but—to do the French justice—not without finding every inch of the route vigorously contested. In January, 1814, the boundary was crossed, and the invaders encamped close to Bayonne, and threatened the town. The main body of the army was posted in the village of Anglet, the outposts lay on the left bank of the Adour, while the French under Marshal Soult occupied the right. The Duke of Wellington fixed his head-quarters in a pretty cottage, crowning one of the wooded hills which overhang Anglet, and from which the view took in Bayonne, the Atlantic, and the great road from Spain. The cottage was called Salha, and was but a short distance from the bay of Blanc Pignon, in which the Adour widens out, as if to gain strength for its final plunge into the ocean. In the middle of this bay, for the protection of the port, there were moored at that time a small armed vessel, called "La Mouche," and several gun-boats, the whole under the command of a lieutenant of the French navy, named Bourgeois, who was burning with a desire to distinguish himself, as might be expected of a naval officer whom the English cruisers had kept from showing his nose out of the harbour for many years; for since the battle of Trafalgar the French were not favoured at sea, nor intended to have dominion over it. This individual was a native of the village of Anglet, and his relatives still lived there, and he was consequently daily put in possession of all the movements which took place in the English camp. A message was brought him, that on a certain day named, the Duke of Wellington was about to reconnoitre the enemy's position on the right bank of the Adour. His informants even went so far as to mention the precise time, the exact point of the river, and the number of officers who would accompany him. Upon hearing this, Bourgeois resolved to attempt a surprise. There were pine woods upon the sandy flats on the left of the Adour, completely cutting off the view of the river from the plain at Anglet, and admirably adapted for an ambuscade to be directed against any one who approached the river from the south. A small body of men concealed in the wood, might, in the opinion of Bourgeois, in case the Duke came without escort, carry him off without being perceived till it would be too late to think of rendering assistance.

However, he did not like to take upon himself the responsibility of such an act without consulting his superior officer, who was stationed at Bayonne. He therefore wrote to him, telling him the information he had received, and asking his permission to attempt a *coup-de-main*. He sent his letter by a sailor on the morning of the 22nd of January, with orders to wait for an answer. The Duke was expected to arrive at noon, so that no time was to be lost. During the absence of his messenger, Bourgeois selected twelve of the best men of his crew, armed them to the teeth, and placed them in the boat, ready to start at a moment's notice. He now began to be very fidgetty, and several times made reference to the "name of thunder," a "thousand devils," a "plague," and the

"vestry-room of a church," or else "the church plate;"—which of them he contemplated, we cannot take upon us to say; and his dissatisfaction reached a climax, when his messenger returned, bringing word from his chief (every man in France has a chief), that his proposal would be taken into consideration. M. Bourgeois considered this rather cool, and not a little provoking, particularly as he had the mortification of witnessing six English officers, on the afternoon of the 22nd, ride slowly along the river, and make their observations at their leisure. The opportunity was lost, and M. Bourgeois took the affair so much to heart, that he had no sleep for the next two nights, and ate but little during the day, and he did not know whether to laugh or cry, when on the 22nd the "chief" wrote to him officially as follows:—

"Monsieur,

"I have communicated your letter to the governor [of Bayonne], and he has replied, that there is no occasion to make any expedition on the left bank of the Adour; but if the enemy should come within range of your guns, you are at liberty to fire upon him."

Considering how unlikely it was that the enemy would ever be such fools as to do anything of the kind, M. Bourgeois did not find much consolation for his disappointment in this permission.

However, he brightened up a little when, just after receiving this letter, a messenger arrived from Anglet with the intelligence that the Duke was about to pay another reconnoitering visit on that very day and in the same place. This time Bourgeois resolved to act upon his own responsibility, and sent word to the chief merely that he was gone to make some soundings in the harbour, and that he had armed his boat's crew for the purpose of guarding against accidents, considering the near vicinity of the enemy's outposts. He took with him twelve picked men, and rowed leisurely down the middle of the river as if he was merely following the current; but as soon as he got into the shelter of the trees, and was hidden from the view of the sentinels on the heights, he suddenly pushed towards the bank and landed. The party made their way through the pine wood, until they arrived at the foot of Blanc Pignon, where they posted themselves in a thicket on both sides of the road along which the Duke would have to pass.

Having stationed his men, Bourgeois went to the top of an eminence at the extremity of the downs, where he posted himself, with a look-out man, in a position whence he could see the English quarters, and the road which led from them, without being seen himself, at least by the enemy. It was not very long before he heard the bugle sounding in the British camp, and saw the troops turning out and falling into their ranks upon the level ground on the heights of Salha. They then passed in review before Wellington, and M. Bourgeois had full opportunity to contemplate their discipline, dexterity, and martial air. Just at this moment he chanced to glance towards the town of Bayonne, and was surprised to see four men on the tower of the cathedral watching either him or the English intently—he knew not which. This rather alarmed him, but his spirits rose on seeing the Duke and six officers on horseback, as soon as the review was over, take a direct road towards the wood. In a few minutes they were within five hundred yards of the ambuscade. Bourgeois took up a stone and flung it amongst his men as a warning to be ready, and waited the result in dread suspense, his hand upon his sword, ready for a rush. At that moment a signal was given from the cathedral tower, and a cavalier darted out from the French advance guard at full gallop, and took his post at the entrance to the wood. This movement aroused the attention of the English; they stopped and deliberated together as to what course they should take. The lookers-out on the cathedral disappeared. M. Bourgeois hastened to the entrance of the wood and assembled his men; but Wellington had already turned his horse's head, and was far on his way to Salha. The chagrin of poor Bourgeois at this frustration of his magnanimous project may be easily imagined.